2002:—"The German Government condemns the violent riots in Gujarat. It is shocked and concerned about the terrible images of dead and the injured as well as burning houses, all the more so because his confrontation is taking place between supporters of two major world religions. The German Government urges the leaders of the groups involved to end the confrontation. The prudent stand taken by the Indian Government, which is pressing for a peaceful solution to the conflict based on the rule of law, deserves our recognition."

France

There was no official statement or comment by the French Government. However, in response to a question asking whether the riots in India which left at least 200 dead were linked to the crisis in Central Asia, the official Spokesperson of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs replied, "We profoundly deplore such violence but I have no other comments."

European Union

The EU General Affairs Council consisting of EU Foreign Ministers adopted a Declaration on 15th April 2002 in which it also expressed its concern at the sectarian violence in Gujarat.

Even though events in Gujarat are strictly an internal matter of the country, the Government of India has, from time to time, sensitized the international community and our principal interlocutors of the actions that have been taken to bring the perpetrators of violence to justice and provide relief and rehabilitation to those affected.

Golden Quadrilateral Project

*373. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Golden Quadrilateral Project connecting Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai, which was to be completed by December, 2003, has now been delayed due to land acquisition problem and law and order situation in some States; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the likely date of its completion?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (MAJOR GENERAL (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The Golden Quadrilateral (GQ) component of National Highway Development Project (NHDP) was targeted for completion by December, 2004. However, we have ourselves pre-poned the target for substantial completion by December, 2003. There are some delays and bottlenecks on account of various formalities which were required to be completed particularly in respect of externally aided projects, land acquisition, environmental clearance and law and order problems. These are being removed with the help of concerned authorities/State Governments. All parameters of the project are being monitored regularlay and GQ is targeted for substantial completion by December, 2003.

Universal Service Obligation in basic telephony

*374. SHRI RAJU PARMAR:
SHRI BHAGATRAM MANHAR:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) what are the recommendations of the TRAI and Attorney General of India with regard to Universal Service Obligation (USO) in basic telephony as per the National Telecom Policy of 1999; and

(b) where do the recommendations of the TRAI and Attorney General of India, stand in the year 2002 as far as USO and village telephony is concerned?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) have recommended appointment of universal service levy @ 5% of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR). This levy is a part of the total service license fee to be paid by the various service providers such as Basic, Cellular, National and International long Distance, Paging, Infrastructure Provider Category-II, Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT). The funds created by the Universal Service Levy shall be spent in rural and remote areas on both public access telephones or community telephones ment for public use and individual household telephones in net high-cost rural/remote areas. The implementation of USO will be divided into two clearly identifiable streams:—